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### **Coral Triangle Initiative Lauded for Sustaining Solomon Islands' Marine and Coastal Resources**



U.S. Embassy Political Officer Regis Prevot presents a gift to Solomon Islands Premier Gordon Darcy Lilo during the fifth anniversary of the Coral Triangle Initiative implementation.

Last month on June 11, 2013, representatives from government, non-government organizations, local communities and school children gathered at the National Gallery in Honiara to view an exhibition marking Coral Triangle Day and the fifth anniversary of the Coral Triangle Initiative's (CTI) implementation.

The exhibition was part of a regional celebration that gathered more than 10,000 people in 60 events across Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, and Timor-Leste to mark Coral Triangle Day and to raise public awareness for ocean, coastal and fisheries conservation issues.

Coral Triangle Day is an annual event celebrating the Coral Triangle – a vast eco-region considered the nursery of the seas, providing spawning grounds and migratory routes for commercially valuable ocean species such as tuna. The Coral Triangle is the world's epicenter of marine life, as it hosts 76% of the world's coral species and 37% of its reef fish species. It also shelters thousands of whales, dolphins, rays, sharks and six of the world's seven species of marine turtles.

However, overfishing, destructive fishing practices, coastal development, unsustainable tourism and climate change are taking a heavy toll, and if left unchecked, may cause the collapse of this unique and globally critical coral reef ecosystem.

During the event in Honiara, government officials lauded CTI programs for advancing local scientific expertise that has informed the country's development planning. "CTI programs are a good base to bring in and develop scientific expertise and approaches to fine tune development and adaptation strategies. Our hope

is that the data and information that CTI programs put together about our seas, islands, communities and people will contribute to baseline development planning and strategies for the survival and adaptation of our people and communities,” Western Province Minister Hon Ralf Bukahite stated during the event.

Solomon Islands Premier Gordon Darcy Lilo attributed the success of the CTI in the Solomon Islands to the dedication of its National Coordination Committee, headed by the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management & Meteorology and the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources.

U.S. Ambassador to the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea Walter North, speaking through a representative, also congratulated the Solomon Islands for its significant achievements in sustaining its marine and coastal resources under the CTI regional and national plan of action goals. He noted that one of most significant milestones achieved was in bringing communities from different islands and levels of government to work together.

Over the past five years, the U.S. Coral Triangle Initiative Support Program (U.S. CTI), managed by United States Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Regional Development Mission for Asia, has worked with the six governments of the Coral Triangle countries to develop conservation guidelines, sustainable fishing practices and action plans associated with the CTI goals. The Coral Triangle Initiative is part of the U.S. Mission’s goal of advancing a sustainable economic growth in Melanesia.

Since 2008, the U.S. CTI Support Program has partnered with the Solomon Islands CTI National Coordination Committee, local governments, communities, local organizations and other donors to develop science-based solutions to protect and sustain Solomon Island’s marine and coastal resources. The U.S. CTI Support Program implements this work through the Coral Triangle Support Partnership, a consortium of non-government organizations comprised of the World Wildlife Fund, Conservation International and The Nature Conservancy.

The significant achievements of the U.S. CTI Support Program include the passage of the first legal framework covering the establishment of protected areas in the country, and the designation of five marine protected areas. These measures have led to sustained fish catch and attracted income-generating tourism activities for local communities. USAID has also assisted in the development of a mobile application platform for fisheries data collection that will help the Solomon Islands manage its fisheries industry and help build capacity in climate change adaptation.

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***Supporting Inclusive, Sustainable, and Transparent Economic Growth in Melanesia***

**Tel: +675 321-1455**

**pdportmoresby@state.gov**

**<http://portmoresby.usembassy.gov>**

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